

The Edge Schools' Federation



Attendance Policy & COVID Addendum

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. Across The Edge Schools' Federation we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality.

Types of Absence

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exclusion;
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents employment
- family bereavement;
- involvement in a public performance;
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis);

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence should **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).

Persistent Absence

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 20% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 80% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

Approved Educational Activity

Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes such as educational visits, or approved sporting activities can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

Registers

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. Each school expects parents/carers to ensure that children are on the school premises by 8.50am. The morning register closes at 9.00 so pupils arriving between 9:00 and 9.30 will be marked with an L indicating they are late for school. However pupils arriving after the register has closed will be registered with a U showing they are present in school but were late enough to affect their learning.

In considering attendance levels, the form register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The Federation's policy with regard to registration will be regularly communicated to parents/carers. The Edge Schools' Federation expects parents/carers to ensure that children are on School premises by 8.50 am.

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half-)termly and yearly basis;
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees;
- facilitate and encourage early intervention;
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc); match attendance trends with attainment trends;
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy;
- report attendance matters to parents/carers/carers.

Response to absence

As vigilant and caring schools we ensure pupil absences are followed and explained. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence, usually through a telephone call. If contact cannot be made a visit will be made to the house by the head teacher accompanied by another member of staff to ascertain the nature of the absence. If no contact can be made the EWO will be contacted and also the initial contact team.

Where a child is off ill for greater than 24 hours a follow up call will be made to parents.

Punctuality

In addressing punctuality across the Federation we:

- have clear procedures - registers close at 9.30 am and 1.30 pm;
- publicise this policy in School and communicate it to parents/carers;
- balance any sanctions with positive encouragement;
- praise and acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality;
- ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons;
- follow up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to monitor attendance and punctuality regularly. The Governing Body set attendance targets annually and are kept informed on attendance figures.

Leave of Absence

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Leave Request' form and any request can only be authorised where School accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher/ Chair of Governors to explain the circumstances.

Where parents/carers take children out of school without authorisation penalty notices will be issued where the trigger of 5 days is met.

Parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the School Roll if the pupil does not return to School on the agreed date of return and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation: The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013).

Leave of absence in term-time will never be authorised:

- during the first term, when a pupil is just starting at School, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class;
- during an assessment/test period – Key Stage 2 SATs
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes **any** level of unauthorised absence;

Penalty Notices

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60. In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 10 school days lost to unauthorised absence in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued. This will state the extent of the child's absences and give parents/carers 15 days to bring about an improvement. In that time the child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of unauthorised holidays warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

Absence for religious reasons

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carers is a member and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Review date: September 2021

Attendance Policy Addendum (COVID 19)

This document does not replace our existing Attendance Policy but it outlines our attendance procedures for the period of school re-opening from September 2020 until matters are reviewed in April 2021.

Background

In March 2020 when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, the Government made amendments to the legislation which meant, parents would not be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

It is now vital for all children to return to school to minimise the long-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

School Attendance will be compulsory from the beginning of the Autumn Term in September 2020.

Children will be welcomed back into school and the usual rules on School Attendance will apply:

- It is the duty of the parent to ensure that their child attends school regularly (where the child is a registered pupil) and is of compulsory school age
- It is the responsibility of the school to record attendance and follow up absence.
- The availability of the local authority to issue sanctions relating to unauthorised absence from school will now continue.

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Who cannot attend school?

- Pupils who have Covid symptoms.
- Pupils who live in the same household as someone who has Covid symptoms.

Where this is the case, please refer to the NHS testing website and inform the school immediately.

If someone in your household is extremely clinically vulnerable, the school will discuss individual cases with parents as necessary.

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school.

However:

A small number of pupils may still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19).

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the current advice on [shielding](#).

Where you and your child have been delayed in returning to the UK or travelling abroad and have been told to remain at home, you should not attend school during the period of quarantine. Please discuss such circumstances with the school and provide documentary evidence in support of the absence; school will consider the circumstances of the trip/time abroad to inform our decision to authorise absence or not.

If rates of the virus rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore, they may be temporarily absent.

Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning too. You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at COVID-19 - ['shielding' guidance for children and young people](#).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer access to education at home. We will monitor engagement with this activity to ensure learning is being accessed appropriately. This may also apply to some pupils with Education Health Care Plans.

Where pupils are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised. All other pupils must attend school.

Pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies and where the absence has been authorised for example;

- The pupil has been granted a leave of absence
- The pupil is unable to attend because of sickness
- The pupil is absent for a necessary religious observance etc.

We understand that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about returning to school. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such. This may also include some pupils with EHCP plans.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, please discuss your concerns with the school so that we can understand your situation and reassure you of the measures we have in place to reduce the risk in school. The school may contact the SEND and School Nursing Teams for advice and support, and we may require medical verification or other relevant documentation in order to assess risk.

Punctuality

Pupils will be given staggered start and finish times to keep 'bubbles' apart as they arrive and leave school. Staggered start and finish times will not reduce the amount of overall teaching time each child receives. Please ensure your child arrives on time and is collected on time in order to minimise disruption in line with the school's Covid risk management. Please contact school ahead if you are experiencing difficulties. If lateness persists, we will want to discuss this with you and agree some support measures; if matters do not improve, the lateness will not be authorised and the matter may be referred to the local authority Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures

Parents and carers should notify the school as normal if your child is unable to attend on any given day. You must update the school regularly regarding any ongoing absence.

- Where a child is not regularly attending school, we will discuss this with you to understand what the difficulties are and agree some supportive measures to improve matters as early as possible. Normal absence procedures will be followed.
- Where the school's efforts do not result in an improvement in attendance or punctuality, and if there is no valid reason for the child to be absent, we will refer to the local authority Education Welfare Officer for additional support, advice and statutory intervention.

Procedures for COVID related absence.

If a parent reports a pupil absence due to COVID symptoms they should stay at home, be advised to get a test immediately and engage with NHS test and trace process. Tests can be booked online

through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

- Code X to be applied during the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known.

Parents must inform school immediately of the results of a test:

- If a pupil tests negative, they should return to school the following day if they are well.
- If the child tests positive they should follow the 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. (This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone). The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal.

- Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. If a positive result is confirmed the pupil should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

- Any siblings in the same household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.
 - Code X to be applied.
- If a pupil tests positive but has no symptoms for COVID-19 they must self-isolate for 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken.
- If they develop symptoms during this isolation period, they must restart their 10-day isolation from the day they develop symptoms.

- Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. Once a positive result is confirmed, the pupil should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

- After 10 days, if the pupil still has a temperature they should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice. The pupil does not need to self-isolate after 10 days if they only have a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

- Code I to be applied

- For all pupils in a 'bubble' who have been sent home and asked to self-isolate for 14 days

- Code X should be applied for all pupils who have been asked to self-isolate. The coding would be updated to I if any of the pupils subsequently develop symptoms and test positive for COVID.

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Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine:

- As usual parents should plan their holidays as part of school breaks. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK;

- Code X is to be applied

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From September, the normal rules will apply during the period of absence relating to the holiday dates. Please refer to our main policy for guidance regarding holidays taken during term time.

- All unauthorised absence is reported to the Education Welfare Service so the local authority can offer additional advice and support to parents as necessary. Where unauthorised absence is persistent, sanctions may be imposed to include warnings, penalty notices, and prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.

- Where a child or family is away from home including abroad, and unable to return home, parents are expected to provide the school with detailed information as to the whereabouts, reasons for travel and estimated return dates. Where the school is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence will not be authorised, and this could result in the local authority issuing a Penalty Notice (please refer to our main

- Leave of absence can only be granted in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. Holidays in term time are not viewed as exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.
- Where the school and the Education Welfare Service have failed to locate the child/family within 20 school days, the child will be referred to the Local authority Children Missing Education Pupil Tracking Officer (CME officer) who will undertake additional checks with other agencies to locate them, including consultation with social care, the police, health and housing. Where these enquiries do not lead to confirmation of the child's whereabouts, the matter will remain open to that service who will widen their enquiries. In these circumstances, the school cannot guarantee to keep a school place open for your child.

Safeguarding

If at any time the school are concerned for a child's safety or welfare from any year group, we will consult with the relevant agencies and follow the local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

*Link to DfE Guidance

[schools- during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>